

Biblical Counseling Center publishes eCounselor's Weekly guide, to encourage counselors and all believers in discipleship and daily growth

A Time to Cry

by Karen Coulter M.A.

Jesus wept (Jn 11:35) – the shortest verse in the Bible, yet so powerful! Almighty God displaying weakness? I think not, but rather compassion for his friends.

Yet some view tears as a sign of weakness. Did God give us tears to display our frailty? No, tears are given to express emotion. Tears provide a healthy outlet for how we feel inside. The Bible says God keeps our tears in a bottle (Ps 56:8) as if they are precious to Him. Tears disgust some people, though not Jesus. Jesus could have kicked Mary and told her to stop the foolishness, washing his feet with her tears, but He didn't. Simon criticized her, but Jesus commended her. The daughters of Jerusalem were weeping as Jesus was being led away to the Cross. Jesus told them not to weep for Him, but to weep for themselves and others (Lk 23:28).

Sometimes those who have experienced abuse or trauma don't feel it is safe to cry, so they stuff their thoughts and feelings inside. They become like a pressure cooker ready to explode, exhibiting depression, anger or anxiety. Crying is a way to release tension, a way to cleanse the emotion that is otherwise stuck inside without expression.

A baby who cannot talk yet communicates by crying. Recently, as I was reading Scripture, I looked up to find my counselee crying. Tears can be a sign of a breakthrough, conviction of sin, or an expression of hurt, anger or sorrow. Tears open up an opportunity to discuss what is going on in the person's heart. My office must remain a safe place to cry!

Why Should We Cry?



God says there is a time to cry as well as to laugh (Eccl 3:4). We are actually commanded to cry. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep* (Rom 12:15). We are blessed when we weep because soon we will laugh (Lk 6:21). *Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning* (Ps 30:5). *They that sow in tears will reap in joy* (Ps 126:5).

Some appropriate occasions to cry:

- Grief, tears for mourning (Gen 23:2, 2Sam 1:12)
- Sadness, a natural outpouring of sorrow (1Sam 30:4)
- Regret, sorrow for sin (Mt 26:75, Jas 4:9)
- Asking God to answer a prayer (Isa 38:5, 1Sam 1:7, 8)
- Pouring out your heart to God (Ps 42:3, Ps 6:6)
- Tears of joy (Genesis 50:1)

Do Real Men Cry?

Many think it is fine for a woman to cry, but real men don't cry. Again, Jesus cried in compassion for His friends (Jn 11:35) and in grief over the city of Jerusalem (Lk 19:41). Paul was a bold man, former leader among persecutors of Christians, someone who withstood beatings, imprisonments and shipwrecks. However, in several passages he shed tears as he wrote to the churches and served the Lord (2Cor 2:4, Acts 20:19). Joseph, a man of great leadership in Egypt, wept when he faced his brothers (Gen 42:24, 43:30, 45:14, 15). Jeremiah is called the weeping prophet. David who killed a lion, bear and giant, who was king of Israel, cried out to God in many of the Psalms (22:1; 69:3). Mordecai cried with a bitter cry for his nation (Es 4:1) and Job regarding his family and property (Job 2:12) and for others (Job 30:25). These godly men were not pansies; they were tough and well respected, yet they wept.

Crying is good for your health?

Scientific evidence indicates that when we cry emotional tears, the body releases stress-relieving endorphins like when we exercise. These chemicals help us feel better and stabilize our moods. Tears also release built-up toxins from emotional stress. When tears are suppressed and a person is unable to cry it can contribute to stress-related diseases such as high blood pressure, heart problems and peptic ulcers.

Like anything else, tears can be used wrongly to manipulate people or to get one's own way. Our tears are only for a time and season while we are here on earth. God will wipe away all our tears for eternity (Rev 7:17); they are not needed in Heaven. Until then, there is an appropriate time and reason to cry.

*O Lord my God, I cried out to You, and You have healed me.
Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning!
You have turned for me my mourning into dancing....
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever!*

- Ps 30:2, 5, 11, 12

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